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POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF THE CUBAN QUESTION.

BY MAYO W. HAZELTINE.

IS A WAR between the United States and Spain among the probabilities of the near future? Should such a contest prove unavoidable, would Spain be able to secure an ally among the European powers? Assuming that she obtained the aid of a strong naval power, should we in our turn require assistance, and, if so, whence would it come? These are questions which diplomatists have been discussing for some time, and they are beginning to force themselves upon the whole American community. We believe that a review of the international situation will show that the drift of events is likely to force the Madrid Government to declare war against this country, and that it will strive to gain the active co-operation of either France or Germany, but that the effort will fail through the interposition of either Russia or England, both of which powers desire the good will of the United States.

I.

IF, before the Cuban insurrection became the subject of debate in Congress, the President had issued a proclamation announcing that a state of war existed in Cuba, and enjoining the observance of a strict neutrality between the belligerents, the revolutionists would have acquired the desired status of belligerency, while the Madrid Government would have had no reasonable ground for objecting to the declaration. Mr. Cleveland would have simply made a statement of fact, attested by the necessity of maintaining over 100,000 soldiers in Cuba, and by the explicit acknowledgment on the part of Prime Minister Canovas del Castillo that the island is the scene of "civil war." But our Executive

has thus far refrained from recognizing the Cuban insurgents as belligerents, in this respect conforming to the precedent set by General Grant, who, although the former Cuban rebellion lasted through both of his administrations, steadily refused to give its promoters the status of belligerency. In the present case, however, the silence of the President has had consequences which, perhaps, were not anticipated. It has provoked so zealous an advocacy of the Cuban cause throughout this country, and such fervid expressions of opinion in Congress, that now, in the eyes of the American people, and of the Spanish people as well, a recognition of belligerency has acquired a significance which, normally, a mere statement of fact would not possess. It has come to be felt on both sides of the Atlantic that in this instance a recognition of belligerency would be introductory to a recognition of independence, which is a very different thing, and would undoubtedly constitute a *casus belli*. Indeed, the resolutions, which, at the hour when we write, seem on the point of being adopted by Congress, not only declare that a state of war entitling both parties to the technical status of belligerents exists in Cuba, but request the President to use his good offices to secure the recognition of Cuba's independence by Spain. It is true that the resolutions are not "joint," but "concurrent" in form, and, therefore, in accordance with a practice which has grown up in apparent disregard of an express requirement of the Constitution, the President may treat them as if they had not been passed. Such was the fate of the Armenian resolutions, but if the same course were pursued toward the wishes expressed by Congress in regard to Cuba there is but little doubt that joint resolutions, of which the Executive would have to take note, could be carried through both Houses. It is even probable that, if disapproved by the President, they could be passed over the veto. In that event we may take for granted that the will of Congress would be obeyed by the Chief Magistrate. But an offer on the part of Mr. Cleveland to mediate between Spain and the Cuban insurgents, even if accompanied with a proposal to guarantee the payment of a large sum of money as the price of Cuban independence, could not, in the existing state of public feeling in Spain, be accepted by the Madrid Government without exciting a popular uprising, which not only would cause the downfall of the present Ministry, but would endanger the monarchy. We

may, therefore, assume that the offer would not merely be rejected, but rejected in such terms as would add to the irritation already exhibited by Congress, and impel that body to take the decisive step of acknowledging the independence of the Cuban republic. If this were not promptly followed by a declaration of war upon the part of Spain, the Cabinet headed by Señor Canovas del Castillo would be replaced by another, which would reflect more faithfully the resentment of the Spanish people. But no intelligent Spaniard can be under any illusions as to the outcome of the trial of strength thus challenged, provided the contest were confined to Spain and the United States. Not only would Cuba be lost, but Spain has other insular possessions of which, were she beaten at sea, she might be deprived. We refer, of course, to Porto Rico, to the Canary Islands, to the Philippine Archipelago, and to the Balearic Isles, one of which, Minorca, was once held by England for a considerable period.

II.

WITH so much at stake, the Madrid Government would undoubtedly make the most strenuous endeavors to secure the aid of one of the great maritime powers of Europe. It is easy to foresee that Spain in her extremity would address herself with special earnestness to Germany and France. If her retention of Cuba were guaranteed by the German Emperor, Spain could afford to gratify his hunger for colonial possessions by a cession of the Caroline Islands in the Pacific, and of the Canaries in the Atlantic. Sooner than abandon the Queen of the Antilles to the revolutionists or to the United States, the Spanish people might even be willing to sell or give Cuba itself to a European ally. By resorting to such an expedient they would but do what France did in 1763, when she ceded Louisiana to Spain, and what Spain herself did, when some forty years later she retroceded that vast territory to France. There is a much later precedent for such a method of slaking national vindictiveness and safeguarding national pride. In 1866, after the battle of Sadowa, the Emperor Francis Joseph, although anxious to make peace with Prussia, refused to relinquish Venetia to Victor Emanuel, but insisted upon ceding it, instead, to France. We can see, then, that Spain could offer the German Emperor some tempting bribes for his assistance. Nevertheless we do not be-

lieve that he would enter into such a bargain. The interests of German producers, manufacturers and life insurers have sometimes come in conflict with those of American rivals in business, but, personally, Kaiser William II. has always shown himself extremely friendly toward the United States. He would feel, too, that, owing to the enormous influx of German emigrants into this country since 1848, a war between Germany and the American republic would be only second in fratricidal horror to a war between the United States and England. We assume, therefore, that, although the Berlin Government might express disapproval of our offer to mediate between Spain and the Cuban insurgents, and more emphatically of our recognition of Cuba's independence, it would abstain from giving Spain any material aid.

We wish we could speak with equal confidence about the attitude of France. At first sight, no doubt, it seems incredible that French republicans would abjure their historical affection for the people of the United States, and place their navy at the disposal of a reactionary monarchy for the purpose of riveting its hold upon an island, the natives of which, in time of peace, are subjected to odious exactions, and in war time are treated with shocking barbarity. Could the whole body of French voters be consulted beforehand by a *plebiscite*, we believe that it would visit such a project with overwhelming reprobation. Unfortunately, when we speak of what France might be induced to do, we have to remember that her action would be determined by a majority of the present Chamber of Deputies. Now, it is notorious that men accused or suspected of being implicated in the Panama Canal and Southern Railway scandals are exceedingly influential in the Opportunist party—which, until recently, had from 1878 controlled the Chamber, and may at any hour regain control of it. The danger then would be that French capitalists, who have already made large investments in Spanish securities, might be induced to launch another Spanish loan, the interest upon which should be guaranteed by a mortgage of the revenues of the quicksilver mines at Almaden and of the tobacco monopoly. It is not likely that the Madrid Government would consent thus to incumber its last valuable resources without obtaining a promise that the mortgagees would use every effort to procure the co-operation of the French republic with Spain against the United

States. Prolonged experience has shown that it would not be difficult to enlist a majority of the Paris newspapers, and many conspicuous Deputies and ex-Ministers, in behalf of any enterprise backed by free-spending financiers. Nor would there be wanting specious arguments for a coalition of France with Spain. The latter country would doubtless offer to renounce in favor of France her pretensions to Morocco. It might be urged also that the encouragement, given by the United States to Cuba to-day, might be offered to a revolt in the French West Indian possessions to-morrow, or to a Brazilian invasion of territory claimed by French Guiana. Nor should it be forgotten that whatever plausibility such pleas, backed by secret bribes, might now have, is liable to be enhanced at any hour through a successful uprising of republicans in Spain, which is now denuded of most of the regular army hitherto relied upon to uphold the monarchy. As between a Spanish republic and the United States, it is to be feared that certain Opportunist leaders would not hesitate to side with the former, provided the operation promised to prove as lucrative as did their connection with the Panama Canal. As the Opportunists are masters of the Senate, it would only be needful to recover the ascendency in the Chamber of Deputies, which until lately they possessed, in order to array in defence of Spain the French navy, which, next to that of England, is the most powerful on earth.

Nevertheless, although the Opportunists should regain control of the Chamber, and be willing, for reasons of their own, to answer the appeal of the Spaniards, we believe that they would be restrained by the veto of another European power. It is improbable that the Emperor of Russia at such a conjuncture would abjure the age-long friendship of the House of Romanoff for this country, a friendship which has been proved more than once in worst extremes. Besides, if France is to be his coadjutor in the great European war which has been so long thought to be impending, it is of paramount interest to him that her naval as well as military strength should be preserved intact. He would be as much averse to seeing French ironclads imperilled in a needless contest with the United States as are the two central powers to beholding the troops of their Italian ally wasted in Abyssinia. Our conclusion is that, were a combination with Spain to be so much as mooted in the French Chamber

of Deputies, the Czar, through his ambassador at Paris, would interpose a remonstrance so strenuous that the scheme would be at once abandoned.

III.

LET us assume, however, for the sake of argument, that the Czar might fail us in our emergency, and that the purchased tools of Spain might seem upon the point of seducing French republicans into a league with the Spanish monarchy, for the purpose of suppressing the Cuban insurrection and of punishing the United States for their expression of sympathy for the insurgents. It is possible that even then, when our demonstrations in the cause of humanity and liberty had brought us to the verge of a fight against great odds, we might not find ourselves without a friend. That friend might prove to be Great Britain, although three months ago, during the fortnight succeeding the publication of Mr. Cleveland's Venezuela message, such a supposition would have seemed absurd. But no reasonable American can have marked the amazing revolution in British public opinion and public feeling since New Year's Day; no one can have observed the willingness now exhibited to admit that Mr. Cleveland was right in thinking that the whole boundary question ought to be submitted to arbitration—a willingness exemplified not only by the Liberal opposition, but seemingly by the Unionist Government as well—no one, we repeat, an have noted these things, without recognizing the signs of a respect for the United States which, although tardy, is profound; and also of a good will which, while not spontaneous or universal, seems certainly to have become predominant. It is never too late to mend, and who shall say that wise British ministers, who have undergone a change of heart, might not bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and seize a precious opportunity to extirpate at a stroke the seeds of rancor planted in American breasts by British maltreatment and contempt experienced by us at divers times since the acknowledgment of our independence. Who shall say that the British Government might not announce to wavering France that Americans have done less for Cuba than Englishmen did for Greece, and that in proclaiming sympathy for the strugglers against Spanish oppression, we have deserved well of mankind. In the face of such a magnanimous announcement from the greatest naval power upon the globe, we

should hear no more of disgraceful schemes to array the iron-clads of French republicans against the Cuban combatants for liberty, and against the American republic. That in the discharge of a high duty we might be for a moment menaced with a corrupt and shameless European combination, may well be the secret wish of many a far-sighted Englishman, for then, with one peremptory word, his country might redress the past, and earn the deathless gratitude of what was once her daughter State.

When one considers how easy it would be to secure the good will of the United States, and of what value their good will might prove one day to England, one can but marvel that no resolute and skillful effort has been made to gain it. Not that of late there have been wanting Englishmen who have seemed to comprehend what such a friendly understanding might eventually mean. We have in mind not only Mr. Goldwin Smith, who has been a life-long advocate of the reunion of the Anglo-Saxon race, and such representative Liberals as Sir William Vernon Harcourt and Mr. John Morley, but also Mr. A. J. Balfour, the leader of the Unionist government in the House of Commons. On the reassembling of Parliament, in the course of the debate on the address, Mr. Balfour invoked the spirit of Edmund Burke to plead for a reunion of the English and American branches of the Anglo-Saxon stock, and he averred that, could Great Britain secure the alliance of the United States, she would fear no foreign foe. Unquestionably Burke would have liked to see England and her lost American Colonies brought once more together, but one of Burke's contemporaries not only desired that consummation, but perceived how to accommodate the means to the end. We refer to Lord Shelburne, who for a time directed the negotiations which preceded the treaty of peace concluded in 1783 between Great Britain and the United States. To Lord Shelburne it seemed clear that, if the terms of peace were marked by the largest confidence and liberality, no difficulty would be experienced in speedily welding the two countries together anew by a community of sentiment and interest. He was inclined to the opinion that, if the colonies were to be renounced, they should be treated with a generosity which would leave no room for friction in the future, and which, by bringing the instinct of kinship into active play, would soon effect a union of hearts. To that end he personally would have been disposed to cede all the British possessions on

the North American continent to the thirteen colonies, transformed into the United States. Had this been done, no student of history can doubt that an intimate alliance between England and her daughter commonwealth would have been formed in 1798, when war with France appeared inevitable. As it was, the pro-British reaction straightway acquired such momentum in the north-eastern states that George Cabot declared that England was fighting the battle of the civilized world, and the Federal Senate, though it went against the grain, accepted the Jay treaty; while later, in the war of 1812, New England was driven to the brink of secession, partly by the ruin of her commerce, but partly also through sympathy for the mother country. Even now, in spite of certain regrettable acts committed by British soldiers in the United States during the war just named, and in spite of the satisfaction with which some influential English statesmen seemed to look forward to the destruction of the Union by the civil war, it would be practicable for England to win the cordial good will and co-operation of the American Republic by reverting to Shelburne's programme. It must be admitted, however, that England could scarcely transfer her costly and useless possessions on the American mainland to the United States, until the inhabitants of the Dominion of Canada had pronounced in favor of such a measure. There is, however, yet another expedient to which England might have recourse. It is at least conceivable that we may be threatened by a hostile European coalition, because we have determined to discharge our debt to civilization by insisting that to the Cuban revolutionists shall not be refused the rights secured to belligerents by the rules of modern warfare. Let us suppose that in a crisis of that kind the message should be flashed under the Atlantic that in the cause of humanity and liberty England would not suffer us to stand alone. No man could deny that such a message would be a splendid proof of the sincerity of England's friendship, and we might then in truth believe in our possession of "kinsmen beyond sea."

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